



# University of Hawaii at Manoa

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## HB 1464, HD 1 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

Statement for  
House Committees on  
Energy, Ecology and Environmental Protection  
Public Hearing - 13 March 1981

By  
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HB 1464, HD 1 would establish a new Department of Environment headed by a director and to be made up from existing programs in the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), and Department of Agriculture (DOA), dealing with environmental protection, water resources management, conservation, and protection. This statement on HB 1464, HD 1 does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

The goal of HB 1464, HD 1 is quite unclear. Section 1 states as the purpose of the Act, the establishment of a new Department of Environment to consolidate certain environmentally related state programs and activities. What is not stated, however, is the rationale or justification for why such consolidation is desirable, what it would accomplish over and above existing department operations, and how the DLNR, DOH, and DOA will meet their other responsibilities without environmental expertise.

As we pointed out in our earlier testimony on the short form of HB 1464, the recognized purposes, duties and responsibilities, of DLNR, DOH, and DOA all require environmental expertise. We would expect the ability of these agencies to meet their stated duties to be severely affected if their competency in environmental expertise were removed.

The removal from the DLNR and DOH of all water related programs may be in conflict with the recent constitutional amendment calling for a single State water agency, unless Department of Environment is to be so designated.

Although we recognize the interrelated nature of environment and public health, several of the programs to be transferred would seem to be more appropriately housed in DOH and we question their removal from DOH jurisdiction. Specifically, the sources of ionizing radiation, safe drinking water, and industrial health functions.

We question the efficacy of the transfer of pesticide programs from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Environment. We are unaware of any serious conflicts or inadequacies in the Department of Agriculture with regard to their pesticide programs. To the best of our knowledge their program management has been responsible, objective, and moderate in approach and has adequately met the needs of the State within the usual constraints of funding and available personnel. We would not anticipate that the proposed transfer will improve the existing programs and in fact could seriously impair their present functions simply by delays due to management reorganization, laboratory facility changes, and removal of pesticide personnel from close working contact with operations and management personnel of the Department of Agriculture.

Page 2, paragraph 5 states that laboratory support services would be provided. The establishment of a separate new laboratory to handle the functions of the Department of Environment will be a major expense. Again the rationale and justification for duplicate laboratory facilities over and above what is presently available is not clear.

The functions and programs of DLNR, DOH, and DOA that would be affected by this change would merely be moved to the new department of environment. There appears to be little change in direction or responsibility of the function or program itself. As such it is unclear what advantage if any could be gained.

The removal of the Office of Environmental Quality Control and the Environmental Council from DOH and their placement under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environment for administrative purposes would have minimal to no significant effect on their usefulness and functions.

We would suggest that the purpose of the bill be amended to include the rationale and justification for the establishment of the department and the major changes proposed. We further suggest that the effect of such a change on the related departments of DLNR, DOH, and DOA be fully assessed and include economic as well as functional analysis and the findings of such an assessment be included in any subsequent committee reports on this bill.